

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0418

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: KHAR-RAMAY RIVALRY HEATS UP AGAIN

REF: LAHORE 0370

B. LAHORE 549 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: DURING PAST WEEK, FEUD BETWEEN PUNJAB GOVERNOR KHAR AND CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY ONCE AGAIN ERUPTED INTO PUBLIC VIEW. ACTUAL TRIGGER REMAINS OBSCURE, BUT ROOT CAUSE IS LONG-STANDING COMPETITION BETWEEN TWO FOR POLITICAL PRIMACY IN PUNJAB. DUST HAS NOT COMPLETELY SETTLED, BUT KHAR UNEXPECTEDLY LEFT LAHORE AND ISLAMABAD FOR MURREE; PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO IS ALSO, AND NOTCOINCIDENTALLY, VISITING MURREE AND MAY INTEND TO STRAIGHTEN OUT KHAR. AT SAME TIME, CHIEF MINISTER RAMAY

HAS ISSUED STRONG STATEMENTS IN LAHORE AND MULTAN ASSERTING THAT THERE IS "NO POLITICAL CRISIS IN PUNJAB" AND THAT THERE IS "NO POSSIBILITY" OF CHANGE IN HIS GOVERNMENT. PRESUMABLY STATEMENTS WERE CLEARED AND APPROVED BY PRIME MINISTER. NUMBER OF OTHER EVENTS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT RAMAY HAS WON THIS ROUND, AND THAT IF ANYONE NOW STANDS TO LOSE HIS POSITION, IT IS KHAR. END SUMMARY.

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1. AS REPORTED REFTEL B, PUBLIC ASPECT OF LATEST ROUND OF KHAR-RAMAY STRUGGLE FOR PRIMACY IN PUNJAB BEGAN WITH REPORT IN KARACHI PAPER MAY 11 THAT GOVERNOR KHAR HAD TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION TO PRIME MINISTER WHEN BHUTTO REFUSED TO ALLOW HIM TO BECOME "POWERFUL" GOVERNOR. THAT WAS HOTLY DENIED BY KHAR, BUT MATTER DID NOT END THERE. RAMAY WAS CALLED TO RAWALPHINDI TO TALK WITH BHUTTO MAY 13 AND AGAIN ON MAY 15. HE RETURNED TO LAHORE MAY 17 AND TOLD PRESS THERE WAS "NO POSSIBILITY OF ANY CHANGE IN THE PROVINCIAL SETUP," THOUGH HE CONCEDED TO NEWSMEN THAT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN PPP WERE "NATURAL THING." IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM ONE JOSENALIST AT LAHORE AIRPORT MAY 17, HE REVEALED THAT HE, KHAR AND BHUTTO MET MORE THAN ONCE IN RAWALPINDI TO DISUCSS "SEVERAL MATTERS;" BY IMPLICATION, HIS DIFFERENCES WITH GOVERNOR ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF LATTER. HIS STATEMENT FOLLOWED PRIME MINISTER'S MAY 16 TELEVISED PRESS CONFERENCE IN RAWALPINDI DURING WHICH HE AGREED WITH QUESTIONER THAT KHAR-RAMAY "CONFRONTATION" HAS ADDED TO "CONFUSION" SURROUNDING LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN PUNJAB.

2. RAMAY'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS TOOK PLACE IN BACKGROUND OF SEVERAL BREACHES OF PUBLIC ORDER IN PUNJAB, IN REACTION TO WHICH HE EARLIER ASSERTED THAT HE ORDERED HARSH CRACK-DOWN ON INSTIGATORS. (SEVERAL OBSERVERS IN LAHORE HAVE OPINED THAT RAMAY'S UNCHARACTERISTICLY TOUGH REACTION TO INCIDENTS WAS PRECIPITATED BY EFFORTS OF KHAR FOLLOWERS TO PORTRAY HIM AS WEAK CHIEF MINISTER INCAPABLE OF COPING WITH SERIOUS PROBLEMS.) RAMAY MADE ANOTHER STRONG STATEMENT IN MULTAN MAY 18, DECLARING THAT THERE WAS "NO POLITICAL CRISIS IN PUNJAB." THAT STATEMENT, WHICH CAPTURED BANNER HEADLINES MAY 19, WAS MADE IN REACTION TO PRESS REPORTS THAT AS MANY AS 60 PUNJAB MPA'S WHO WERE FOLLOWERS OF KHAR HAD THREATENED TO RESIGN IF KHAR WERE NOT ACCORDED POWERS HE SEEKS.

3. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL OTHER INDICATIONS THAT PPP FACTIONALISM AND THE KHAR-RAMAY CONTROVERSY HAVE BECOME MORE INTENSE DURING THE PAST WEEK. ON MAY 12 RAMAY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ORDERED INTENSE POLICE CAMPAIGN TO ROUND UP "BAD CHARACTERS." PAKISTAN TIME MAY 14 REPORTED THAT ALMOST 7,000 SUCH PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED OVER PREVIOUS FEW DAYS, AND INDICATIONS ARE THAT THOSE DETAINED INCLUDED KHAR FOLLOWERS.

4. MEANWHILE, NUMBER OF ANTI-KHAR PPP LEADERS, INCLUDING PUNJAB PPP PRESIDENT MERAJ KHALID, GOP AGRICULTURE MINISTER SHEIKH RASHID, PUNJAB LAW MINISTER SAGHIR AHMED, PPP

SECRETARY GENERAL MUBASHIR HASAN AND GOP RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS MINISTER MAULANA KAUSAR NIAZI HAVE PUBLICLY CONDEMNED PPP FACTIONALISM, PROMISED CLEAN-UP OF CORRUPTION, ANNOUNCED PLANS TO "RECOVER AND CONFISCATE ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH REQUIRED BY PEOPLE SINCE INDEPENDENCE" AND ASSERTED THAT PPP OFFICE HOLDERS MIGHT BE CHANGED AGAIN (BY INFERENCE WEEDING OUT FOLLOWERS OF KHAR).

5. IN ADDITION TO ENCOURAGING FRIENDLY NEWSPAPERS TO PORTRAY INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE IN WAY CALCULATED TO PORTRAY RAMAY AS BEING UNABLE TO COPE, GOVERNOR KHAR HAD ISSUED SERIES OF STATEMENTS TO PRESS DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE THAT HE IS TAKING ACTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE IN PROVINCE. GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED PRESS, APPARENTLY UNCERTAIN AS TO WHICH WAY WIND IS BLOWING, HAS GIVEN ACTIVITIES AND STATEMENTS OF KHAR AND RAMAY EQUAL PROMINENCE.

6. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN WHAT TRIGGERED CURRENT MANIFESTATIONS OF LONG-STANDING KAR-RAMAY TUG OF WAR. WE NOTE THAT SENATE ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP, PROBABLY IN JULY, AND WE CONTINUE TO HEAR OCCASIONAL RUMORS THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS MAY BE IN WIND BEFORE LONG. MAY 19 PAKISTAN TIMES PROVIDES ANOTHER POSSIBLE POINTER IN STORY SAYING THAT MUBASHIR HASAN HAS COMPLETED SPECIAL REPORT REQUESTED BY BHUTTO ON POLITICAL SITUATION IN PUNJAB, IN WHICH PPP SECRETARY GENERAL SEVERELY CRITICIZED FACTIONALISM ("GROUPISM") WITHIN PARTY. IF HE DID, REPORT WOULD PRESUMABLY POINT FINGER AT KHAR, ALTHOUGH PERHAPS NOT BY NAME. THIS AND OTHER CHARGES NOTED IN PARA 4 SEEM TO BE THINLY VEILED ATTACKS ON KHAR.

7. RAMAY'S STATEMENTS IN LAHORE AND GEITU ON MAY 17 AND 18, RESPECTIVELY, WERE EXTREMELY STRONG AND CONFIDENT. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WE CANNOT IMAGINE HE WOULD HAVE MADE EITHER STATEMENT WITHOUT HAVING HAD IT CLEARED OR APPROVED BY THE PRIME MINISTER.

THIS LEADS US TO CONCLUDE THAT RAMAY'S POSITION IS NOT PRESENTLY THREATENED. ON OTHER HAND, KHAR'S UNEXPECTED JOURNEY TO MURREE HILL STATION AT SAME TIME AS BHUTTO SUGGESTS THAT HE IS ON RECEIVING END OF ANOTHER IN LONG SERIES OF PRIME MINISTER'S PATERNAL LECTURES ON POLITICAL BEHAVIOR. SHOULD HE MAKE SAME MISTAKE HE DID IN EARLY 1974 AND TRY TO FIGHT BACK, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT HIS NEWLY-RECOVERED POSITION IN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT COULD BE IN IMMINENT JEOPARDY. SPENGLER

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